

**IDRC Communications  
Divisions**

**DRAFT**  
**Stakeholder Consultations**  
**Report on Public Affairs and**  
**Government Relations**  
**Activities**  
**2000 – 2004**

**SUBMITTED TO:**  
**THE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION**  
**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE**

**PREPARED BY:**



**THE  
GOVERNANCE  
NETWORK™**

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# BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2001, IDRC's Communications Division developed its first Communications Strategy for the years 2000 – 2005. The Communications Strategy was intended to help IDRC achieve its institutional goals and objectives outlined in the Corporate Strategy and Program Framework (CSPF).

The Communications Division identified the key external communications objectives as: building a network in Ottawa; and, increasing awareness of IDRC's objectives and activities relative to broader government objectives and goals in relation to foreign affairs and international development. To advance these objectives, the Division developed and implemented key public relations and stakeholder outreach strategies and plans.

To prepare for an IDRC strategic planning meeting to be held in September 2004, IDRC contracted The Governance Network (TGN) to conduct a high level, preliminary assessment of the effectiveness of the Communications Division's Communications Strategy and activities in the areas of public affairs and government relations. The assessment was based on a stakeholder consultation process, which reviewed the Communications Division's and IDRC's achievements in achieving its public affairs and government relations objectives and priorities in key areas.

This Stakeholder Consultation Report is intended to be used by the Communications Division to support its own preliminary self-reflection on the achievement of past objectives and to help define future directions and priorities for the Division. In all likelihood, the issues and questions raised in this Report will confirm perceptions and issues already on the radar of the Communications Division. Other observations and questions raised might require further investigation. The Report's greatest utility may be in stimulating debate within the Division and throughout IDRC about the next steps in the ongoing and evolving process of building a network in Ottawa and continuing to raise IDRC's profile. While not part of the original intention of the stakeholder consultations, this Report contains information that may inform IDRC in its future strategic planning exercises.

## METHODOLOGY

This consultation process was designed to solicit stakeholder feedback and views on the outcomes and activities of the Communications Division in relation to the Public Affairs and Government Relations unit. Given that the Division did not have any pre-existing performance measures or indicators, a framework for the consultations was developed through a planning session with representatives from IDRC's Communications Division and Evaluation Unit.

The objective of the Consultation Planning Session was to bring together key staff to validate the Division's original objectives, key priorities and activities and confirm what the Division had expected to accomplish over the period being assessed. The session was an important opportunity to obtain agreement on key stakeholder groups and individuals to be consulted, as well as to review existing performance indicators and how they could be tailored to suit the purpose of the current consultation process.

This stakeholder consultation process was primarily based on two data sources:

1. Documentation review including:
  - ⇒ IDRC Communications Strategy, 2000 - 2005 and related work plans; CSPF documents; IDRC's Act and General Bylaws; 2004 Ministerial Briefing Book; annual reports and a review of website information on IDRC's research and events activities.
2. Stakeholder interviews conducted over the months of August and September 2004. In total, 20 interviews were conducted with the following stakeholder groups:
  - ⇒ IDRC senior staff;
  - ⇒ Journalists;
  - ⇒ Senior public servants; and,
  - ⇒ Experts in international research and development.

This Stakeholder Consultation Report is based on the data and information collected through these two lines of evidence. The Report also includes two short case studies. They have been developed to profile, in more detail, the efforts and activities of both IDRC and the Communications Division in informing and influencing the directions in Canadian foreign policy and international development.

The assessment of the outcomes of a communications division can often be a challenge as it is often difficult to separate communications as a function within an organization and the work and activities of the division itself. This assessment challenge was present throughout the consultation process and was confounded by the additional problem of separating the efforts of the Communications Division to raise the profile of the Centre from the strategic direction and actual activities of IDRC. As a result, in a number of places throughout this Report comments and feedback are included that relate to the work of the entire organization and IDRC's strategic directions. These are provided as information that the Division may want to reflect upon and use to help inform the Senior Management Committee in future strategic planning.

This Report contains the consensus findings that emerged from consultations with a selection of senior leaders and stakeholders identified by the Public Affairs and Government Relations unit of the Communication Division. The Unit has been working with and/or attempting to influence these target audiences over the last four years. While the Report represents a snapshot of areas where general consensus was found among those consulted, the findings should not be construed as definitive but rather requiring further supporting evidence or investigation to confirm the findings and to determine the appropriate course of action or next steps.

## FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS: IDRC'S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

For the purpose of the consultation process, interview frameworks were developed for each stakeholder group to assess the three strategic objectives of IDRC's Communications Division: informing, influencing, and sharing information with targeted audiences.

**Informing** Canadian and international researchers and academics, policymakers, and institutions about IDRC's programs, activities, and research results.

### **Key Assessment Points:**

- ⇒ Internal change – ensuring employees understand and take full advantage of strategic communications; and
- ⇒ Extent to which IDRC has been repositioned in Ottawa – with politicians, public servants and journalists.

**Influencing** policymakers, the research, international and donor communities, the media and informed publics about the value of IDRC's research and approach.

**Key Assessment Points:**

The Communications Division has been conducting targeted outreach within the Canadian foreign policy family in relation to:

- ⇒ Influencing key stakeholders and having a seat at the table;
- ⇒ Increasing partnerships with federal colleagues in the area of international development and foreign policy; and,
- ⇒ Securing IDRC's resource base.

**Sharing** IDRC values, policies, and research activities with IDRC staff in headquarters and regional offices as well as partners.

**Key Assessment Points:**

- ⇒ Knowledge brokers – sharing information and making connections to increase the reach of information about IDRC and its research programs

Many of those consulted for this assessment had very focused and targeted relationships with IDRC, based on a past or current working relationship around a particular event, research project or initiative. As such, many could only assess the Communications Division from a narrow or limited perspective. As a result of this limited relationship, they were unable to elaborate more broadly and specifically on the outcomes of IDRC's work, research and activities in the south. For the most part, those interviewed could only speak to IDRC's role, position and value within the Canadian foreign policy family – which was the basis of this exercise and the reason individuals were invited to participate in this consultation process.

As noted earlier, a number of those consulted had comments regarding IDRC future directions and priorities, which clearly fall outside the direct responsibility or accountability of the Communications Division. This may be a consequence of the line of questioning established in the interview framework. While outside the mandate of this assessment, the information is included as a basis for reflection for senior management and the Communications Division as it moves forward.

## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

IDRC is universally respected and is considered to be a great Canadian success story by all those consulted for this assessment. It is viewed as a distinctive Canadian entity that supports researchers in the south in developing community-based solutions to critical development challenges. The majority of those consulted agreed that the Centre's 30-year history of supporting groundbreaking international development research puts it in a unique position to broker this knowledge base and its broad international networks to influence Canada's international and foreign policy agenda.

*IDRC is really unique, certainly in Canada, and it has a global niche as well. It largely builds "soft" knowledge – expertise and human capital – capacity in the south and most of its funding is very strategic. It also has an extraordinary reputation throughout the south because it stays the course. It doesn't pull out after a few years, which is typical of most development organizations.*  
(External Expert)

Among the external stakeholders consulted, IDRC's leaders garner a great deal of credibility, respect and influence and its researchers are viewed as world leaders in their respective fields of expertise. The consensus among these informants is that IDRC's reputation on the international stage eclipses its reputation domestically. In Canada, IDRC is viewed as being, and in fact is, largely known among a small group of knowledgeable thinkers in the area of international development. Most of those consulted felt the Centre is relatively unknown outside these circles.

What follows is an assessment of IDRC's public affairs and government relations activities in relation to its three key strategic objectives of informing, influencing and sharing.

## INFORMING

*Informing Canadian and international researchers and academics, policymakers, and institutions about IDRC's programs, activities, and research results.*

### Key Assessment Points

- ⇒ Internal change – ensuring employees understand and take full advantage of strategic communications; and,
- ⇒ Extent to which IDRC has been repositioned in Ottawa – with politicians, public servants and journalists.

It was widely recognized by those consulted from within IDRC that, in the past, the Communications Division did not have a clear understanding of the strategic communications requirements of the Centre. Under the Centre's current leadership, communications was repositioned under the President's Office, along with audit and evaluation and policy. This organizational restructuring also integrated a government relations and public affairs role into the Communications Division.

*In the early years I thought they were terribly academic. I remember initially feeling alienated from the material they produced, thinking 'who will benefit from this?' Over the years, my impression is that it has become more rooted, more connected to the people and real issues. Maybe my initial impression was inaccurate, or perhaps their research has become more rooted, or maybe the researchers themselves have become more rooted in the communities.*  
(Journalist)

One of the key strategic objectives of the Communications Division was to more proactively serve its internal clients by working more closely with program leaders and senior management to meet their communications needs. A related outcome of this activity was to work with IDRC employees to ensure they have a better understanding and take full advantage of strategic communications.

Of those consulted who were directly aware of the activities of the Communication Division (primarily the internal stakeholders and communication professionals in other federal departments), all indicated that the Division has changed for the better over the last 5 years. In particular, internal stakeholders/clients viewed the Division as being more connected to the work/programming at the Centre. The partnership approach, which the Communications Division is seen as adopting, is viewed as contributing to its working more effectively with key program areas and as a positive step forward. This, in turn, was assessed as having a positive impact on the ability of IDRC to more effectively communicate the results of various research and program activities.

## Positioning IDRC within the Canadian Foreign Policy Family

### Raising Awareness of IDRC's Expertise

IDRC and the Communications Division identified the need to position the Centre differently within Ottawa – particularly with politicians, public servants and journalists. A key objective of the Communications Division was to ensure that IDRC is seen as adding value to Canada's foreign policy discourse based on its unique expertise, research results and networks.

*IDRC's participations at world events, such as the Conference de Montreal, has helped to bridge a gap between the development research communities and business leaders in the US and Europe and it has helped to make the broader international community aware of the work Canada and IDRC is doing. (External Expert)*

IDRC, supported by the Communications Division, has used key venues and documents to inform stakeholders of its research activities and programs. Some of IDRC's key activities identified in this consultation process were:

#### 1. Convening and Sharing:

- ⇒ Raise awareness of IDRC networks through booths at conferences, particularly international conferences held in Canada and global fora, such as the World Water Forum and the World Forum on Sustainable Development;
- ⇒ Tapping into its network for key learning and knowledge sharing events, including key interdepartmental committees;



- ⇒ Evening forums and workshops, such as the June 2004 'Linking Research to Policy Workshop';
- ⇒ The Conference de Montreal (Social Responsibility June 2004) – annual economic forum at which IDRC was invited to help set the agenda, identify speakers and participants and provide the development point of view; and,
- ⇒ Pyramids of information, including the 'In Focus' Series.

## 2. Planning – Informing and Providing Guidance and Direction:

- ⇒ CSPF regional and Ottawa consultations. Those who participated in these sessions found them very informative. The consultations provided participants with grounded insight into IDRC's proposed directions and priorities. They also gave federal participants an opportunity to potentially influence IDRC's priorities, identify possible overlap and enough insight to identify areas where their departments could build on IDRC's work and opportunities for cooperation/collaboration. One participant noted that the consultations were not a two-way dialogue with IDRC. It was suggested that IDRC's direct participation in the discussions would have allowed for a more fulsome debate of the issues and direction.
- ⇒ Research papers and publications

An interesting example of the extensiveness of IDRC's sharing and distribution of its knowledge, products and research, is the fact that at least three individuals consulted mentioned the Millennium Development Goals. In these instances, they recommend that IDRC report on the progress it has made in the achievement of its own goals in relation to these Goals. It was suggested that such a Report could be used as an example to influence other departments to report on their achievement of goals. A quick review of IDRC's website indicates that a similar Report already exists, suggesting its stakeholder outreach in this area may have fallen short.

## Understanding IDRC's Expertise

All of the key stakeholders consulted for this study indicated that they viewed IDRC as distinctly different from other members of the foreign policy family, particularly in relation to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). One explanation for this difference is that, as a Crown corporation, IDRC is able to operate at arms-length from government. This level of independence enables it to take risks and support projects outside the mandate of other government departments and agencies. The senior public servants consulted viewed this independence as giving IDRC exceptional freedom to tackle issues other departments/agencies are unable to address.

*The current administration of IDRC has done a good job of increasing the profile of IDRC and demonstrating the activities that support foreign policy and development priorities.*  
(Senior Public Servant)

*IDRC does very good work for an informed audience – and should likely continue to target at this level – not the average Canadian.*  
(Senior Public Servant)

*When I worked at PCO, I was struck by the excellent relationship they had with various policy groups. They seemed to get that it's important to talk to people like me and people more senior than me. They realized they need to get to people in the machinery of government and that showed real smarts.*  
(Public Servant)

At least two thirds of stakeholders who participated in the consultation process indicated that IDRC's uniqueness also comes from its direct work with researchers in developing countries to promote *research in the south, for the south, by the south*. Engaging local researchers who are aware of local issues is relatively rare and IDRC is considered a pioneer in this area. As was noted by the two external experts, IDRC's network of researchers and development experts in the south and its support of the development of research that is actually applied in the development context, are viewed as providing IDRC with a truly unique perspective that cannot be found in any other government department or agency.

While IDRC is widely recognized internationally, over three quarters of the external stakeholders consulted indicated that IDRC is not as well known within Canada's broader foreign policy community. There is a general sense that IDRC is known and highly regarded in senior circles of the federal government and among a small, elite group of Canadian researchers and policy experts, but membership in this circle is viewed as relatively small. Beyond this core group, interviewees consulted believe individuals working in the areas of foreign affairs and international development are not tapping into IDRC to the fullest extent possible. As a result, IDRC's expertise, knowledge and access to its international networks may be under-utilized in Canada. Several observed the resulting loss to public policy development, and noted that IDRC has been active in demonstrating that it is not enough just to do research, but that it has to be connected to policy and outcomes.

It was also noted by the vast majority of those consulted that IDRC and the Communications Division deserved credit for their efforts to increase the Centre's visibility. Over the last five years, key leaders within the organization and representatives of the Communications Division were recognized as doing a good job at raising the profile of IDRC among federal colleagues, including Industry Canada, DFAIT, CIDA, Environment Canada, Finance Canada, the Privy Council Office as well as key ministers, and encouraging a broader representation of individuals within international development discussions. (Note: more analysis of IDRC's role within the foreign policy family is found under the **Influence** section).

With that being said, when asked about specific understanding and examples of how IDRC has contributed to equitable, enlightened and sustainable development in the south, most were not aware of IDRC's direct impact and influence in this area.

*I can't answer unfortunately...I am sure they do good work but I am not aware enough of their specific projects. I like to be informed generally about their work, but I am not informed enough to know how it is being applied in the south.*

This above statement is fairly typical of comments made by many of the external stakeholders consulted. It reflects the fact that most of the stakeholders identified for this consultation process were selected to assess IDRC's progress in the area of public affairs and government relations as it relates to the Canadian foreign policy family, and less on their understanding of and/or familiarity with IDRC's impact in the south.

In addition, those senior leaders consulted were less aware of the actions and strategies of the Communications Division and more aware that IDRC generally, specifically the Chairman, President and other senior level employees, had been conducting more targeted outreach activities.

## Key Challenges Identified

*My view has changed since I have been working more closely with IDRC. Previously I knew them (IDRC) from their materials and presentations but not a working relationship. Now I see even more their value. The change is attributable to having a hands-on relationship with them more than any outreach effort on their part.*  
(External Expert)

*I recognize the initials, but that's about all. With all the agencies carrying initials – acronym-able or not – they haven't discovered the trick to make themselves recognizable, or don't want to.*  
(Journalist)

### Raising the Profile of IDRC to the First Point of Contact in Niche Areas

The results of this high-level consultation process indicate that the work of IDRC is not extensively known, specifically among federal Canadian international development colleagues. Virtually all the external stakeholders consulted indicated that IDRC is not at the top of their list of places to turn for information on international development. Of the journalists and senior and mid-level public servants consulted, all indicated that they often turn to DFAIT, CIDA, the NGO community or academia for information on international development. While many had been to the IDRC website and had approached IDRC for information, the Centre was not normally the first point of contact. While selected interviewees who participated in specific events were aware of IDRC's presence and involvement, almost all those interviewed were not completely aware of the extent and impact of its participation at these events.

Journalists and public servants were also alike in indicating that IDRC could be more proactive in providing them with ongoing updates of IDRC research activities; of drawing links between IDRC based research and current events; and in taking a stance on the policy direction that the Canadian government should consider adopting. As noted by one interviewee, the easier it is to access the information, the more likely journalists and public servants are to return to the supply source.

## INFLUENCING

*Influencing policymakers, research, international, and donor communities, the media, and the public about the value of IDRC's research and approach.*

*...I certainly feel my impression of them (IDRC) has improved a lot over the years as I have seen them in action. I think they have been successful in improving their relationship with the business community.*  
(External Expert/Political)

### **Key Assessment Points:**

The Communications Division has been conducting targeted outreach within the Canadian foreign policy family in relation to:

- ⇒ Influencing key stakeholders and having a seat at the table;
- ⇒ Increasing partnerships with federal colleagues in the area of international development and foreign policy; and,
- ⇒ Securing IDRC's funding or resource base

### **Influencing ~ Having a Seat at the Table**

As noted by the majority of the senior external stakeholders consulted, IDRC's role is not viewed as influencing policy overtly, but rather providing decision makers with research findings and data to inform policy decisions. As IDRC is clearly aware, having recently conducted a workshop on linking research to policy outcomes, it is very difficult to make direct attribution of research to policy decisions.

Since 2000, IDRC has conducted extensive outreach and information sharing activity. This outreach is viewed as providing key partners with a better idea of the role and knowledge that IDRC can bring to the table. As a result, their impressions of IDRC have improved.

The findings of this consultation process indicate that the extent to which IDRC is viewed as influencing policy direction and decisions is linked to the interviewee's experience in working directly with IDRC rather than on specific outreach activities of the Communications Division.

What follows is an overview of examples provided by those consulted as identifying IDRC's *influence*:

- ⇒ IDRC's long history of work in Colombia was identified by a few of those consulted as having an influence on the establishment of the new Colombian government.
- ⇒ IDRC has been able to demonstrate how ICTs contribute to development, particularly economic growth. CIDA and Industry Canada representatives cited IDRC's work in this area as informing and

*They do have influence because they put forward a set of tools to ask "how do we really know if what we are doing is really working?" This is a question all organizations struggle with worldwide. Something they do right is to do some systematic work on their own and involve southern researchers. IDRC is very self conscious and very self critical in what it does. That's not the usual OECD or DFAIT approach – looking at their own work and coming to a judgment.*  
(External Expert)

*One of the things I like about IDRC is their effort to integrate a variety of perspectives. They bring in grassroots, as well as multinational perspectives. They try to tie in economic, environment, gender, etc. into the issues they explore. (Journalist)*

*It (Diseases Without Borders) was spectacular event involving high profile leaders such as Stephen Lewis, Bernard Kouchner, James Obinsky and various Ministers from various African and South American countries. When you see them interact with these high level people you can see their influence. In this event, their research definitely had a major impression on the participants. (Public*

*There is a big disadvantage for IDRC to be seen as another foreign aid agency. (Senior Public Servant)*

*IDRC has been as strong as it has been because it has kept itself firmly focused on the South. To the extent that it wants to deepen the knowledge it has, it has to engage the North too and how much of its total efforts should be in the North? There's a risk in tipping the balance. They have to find the right balance. (External Expert)*

reinforcing related departmental and government-wide priorities, policies and programs.

⇒ IDRC and the Communications Division were identified as being able to influence events such as the Development Assistance Committee and the Conference de Montreal. In the case of the latter, IDRC is credited with bridging the human and social dimension of international development with the economic perspective. For this consultation process, three stakeholders were able to speak to the role of IDRC in influencing the direction of the event, the participation of key economic and industry ministers in the Conference, and economic thinkers about the benefit of having representatives from the third and developing worlds at the table. In addition, IDRC is viewed as providing conference organizers with access to leading minds who are working in developing countries.

⇒ It was noted that IDRC, lead by its executive and research team, are able to bridge policy with research and talk about development issues in a context that is relevant to business executives and academics. It was also praised for tackling tough questions about the merits and effectiveness of its own work, something not often pursued by other government departments and agencies.

⇒ In May 2003, IDRC and CIDA jointly sponsored a discussion at the Conference of Montreal entitled “Diseases Without Borders: An Economic Struggle?” to examine how various stakeholders, including major pharmaceutical companies, other business sectors, governments, academics and NGOs are developing innovative partnerships to address global health crises. The session was identified as significant success as noted in the quote in the side panel.

## Key Challenges Identified

### Finding the Balance between Independence and Influencing Government Agendas and Policies

While it was recognized that IDRC has increased its presence and role within Canada's foreign policy community, a majority of the external stakeholders consulted questioned the extent to which IDRC *should be* within the inner circle of Canada's foreign policy family. Senior federal public servants indicated that a key challenge for IDRC was/will be to determine the extent to which IDRC should be in influencing Canada's foreign policy and the international development agenda.

Although it was agreed by the majority of the external stakeholders consulted that IDRC needs to be linked and recognized within Canada's foreign policy





family - as a matter of survival - it was felt that being too integrated may compromise the Centre's arms-length freedom and independence. Most public servants and external researchers interviewed in this consultation process felt that IDRC needs to balance the trade-off between independence and a role in influencing and shaping policy.

The same argument holds true with regard to increasing IDRC's public profile. Proactive media relations and other stakeholder outreach strategies present the opportunity to publicize IDRC's activities domestically and to influence the national policy agenda. However, the downside is that the Centre may be obliged to take positions on issues which could be unpopular with, or risk the organization's arms-length relationship from, government. Several observers noted that there must be a conscious decision whether to raise IDRC's profile or continue to remain under the radar.

*Do they want to be better known at the risk of being controversial? If they're afraid, they should give up the objective of being known.*  
(External Expert)

### Positioning IDRC within the Federal Framework

As one senior public servant observed, it is important for IDRC to play an essential challenge function in how Canada defines its foreign policy levers, noting that IDRC was originally set up to support higher-level, forward-looking strategic research on international development in the south.

At least two thirds of external stakeholders consulted indicated that they saw IDRC more as an international development think tank. The question raised by one senior public servant was how does IDRC want to be seen – *“as a think tank, a center of excellence or as a government agency?”*

*It's not a question of better or worse. If IDRC is integral to government then their budget and priority setting are different. If they are arms-length, then they are granted a resource base, but given more independence and less of a role in influencing/ shaping government policy.*  
(Public Servant)

IDRC is viewed by all of those consulted as being at the leading edge of thinking and research within international development. However, it was also recognized that the federal foreign policy community has expanded with most departments and agencies establishing an international development arm. Not only government but also academics, NGOs, foundations and think tanks, as well as other research institutions are now *“in the international research game”*. While IDRC was a pioneer in this area, it was suggested by one senior public servant that perhaps the time has come for IDRC to carve out a new niche that takes the organization to the next level. A number of questions were raised, therefore, as to:

- ⇒ What is IDRC's niche market?
- ⇒ What activities are core to IDRC? Where does it have a comparative advantage in providing strategic and forward thinking research and advice on international development?
- ⇒ Should IDRC be directly integrated into Canada's foreign policy family or should it be one step removed and provide direction and advice to government, when it falls within IDRC's mandate, based on its

empirically grounded research? It was noted that each path has different organizational conditions and consequences.

### Influence is based on Relationships

*DMs may know what IDRC has to contribute, but that doesn't mean that those working at various levels in the organization do.*  
(Senior public servant)

Overall, IDRC's influence within the Canadian foreign policy family is viewed as modest to medium, which is mostly attributed to the niche it occupies. It was noted by one public servant that IDRC's impacts within that family was *"pretty modest – even CIDA's influence is modest and IDRC is a smaller player than CIDA."*

Within its niche, which was identified as international development research, policy and capacity building, IDRC is viewed as occupying a higher plane. Consultations indicate that IDRC's sphere of influence within Ottawa is clearly identified as being better and more expansive than previous years and this is largely attributed to the leadership and outreach of the Chair and President.

*In the end, influence is built on relationships – it is an insider's game – not a place for public relations.*  
(Senior Public Servant)

Senior leaders interviewed in this consultation process noted that influencing government comes down to relationships and that IDRC's center of influence hinges, to a great extent, on its relationships with senior public servants and key federal ministers.

While it was recognized that senior leaders within IDRC have engaged in extensive outreach activities and are meeting more frequently with their federal counterparts/colleagues, it was suggested that IDRC needs to develop a strategy that targets each organization at multiple levels. In the end, IDRC needs to also reach the policy analyst, speechwriters, event coordinators, etc.

While IDRC has communicated a strong message to program staff that they need to be better connected to the Canadian foreign policy family, over half of the public servants interviewed as part of this consultation process indicated that more could be done to encourage IDRC program officers to undertake more networking and outreach with their federal colleagues.

In addition, it was strongly recommended by both public servants and external experts that IDRC use third parties to leverage its influence, including think tanks, academics and NGOs who also attempt to influence policy and decision makers.

The consultations revealed that some of IDRC's success in increasing its influence could be at least partly attributed to the Communications Division. However, it was noted by one internal stakeholder that the Corporate Strategy is multi-pronged and includes outreach at all staff levels, far beyond the domain of the Division.

Some of the key activities of the Communications Division that were identified as supporting the outreach activities of IDRC include: dissemination of the Annual Report; setting up key meetings and making key connections (such as meetings with new ambassadors appointed to countries where they are working); developing country profiles and theme profile sheets (e.g. what IDRC is doing re: Trade Policy) that can be used for briefings; identifying key meeting and outreach opportunities for senior staff; working with programme staff to develop communication strategies for various programs and their expected outcomes; identifying key interdepartmental committees where IDRC should be represented, etc..

### **Securing IDRC's Resource Base**

IDRC has identified the importance of increasing its profile and positioning itself within the budget process in order to help secure IDRC's funding base. In response, the Division targeted key meetings between the President or IDRC's Chairman of the Board with key federal ministers and colleagues at Finance Canada, Foreign Affairs Canada, CIDA and the Privy Council Office. As a result of these efforts, IDRC was mentioned in the 2003 Budget, including a commitment to increase funding over a two-year period and changing the way IDRC receives its appropriations. This is the first time since its inception that IDRC was mentioned in the federal budget.

This inclusion may be the result of a number of factors, including relationships with key leaders in Finance Canada as well as changes in government priorities. It is clear from this stakeholder consultation process that influence is based on relationships. As a result, the Division should have a strategy that ensures ongoing dialogue between the President and key federal colleagues – this is particularly important when key players change.

In 2001, the Institute for Connectivity of the Americas (ICA), a multi-stakeholder initiative, was announced by the Prime Minister at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. As part of this announcement, IDRC has received funding to promote research on improved access to, and the use of ICTs, in the developing countries of the Americas.

In 2002, IDRC also received additional funding to oversee the establishment of the Centre for Connectivity in Africa to help bridge the digital divide. Based on the outcomes of the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) and the G8 Africa Action Plan, IDRC was allocated \$2.5 million to strengthen policy-making, based on evidence gathered through the Centre's research in Africa. This increase in funding base was attributed to IDRC's ability to communicate its work in this area and to position itself as a world leader on issues related to Africa and ICTs for development.



*I think it's a shame there isn't greater CIDA/IDRC collaboration and cooperation. I see it as a sister organization to CIDA, with a research agenda that complements CIDA's technical agenda. We've missed some of the synergies possible and the blame for that can be spread around all the organizations involved.*

*We are meant to complement the work of each other, as there is no contradiction that undercuts that collaboration. The underlying reason why it doesn't always happen is the competitive nature of the two structures. I think it goes both ways.*  
(Public Servant)

*CIDA's policy goals are to become more recipient driven, which will require that it has a better knowledge of the region and recipients – this is where IDRC has extensive knowledge, research and network. The challenge will be taking what IDRC has learnt and applying it in CIDA/DFAIT's worlds.*  
(Public Servant)

## Addressing Tensions between IDRC and CIDA

Despite the near universal assessment that IDRC's research is valuable, the findings of this consultation process indicate that IDRC may not be successfully communicating and/or demonstrating how its activities complement the work carried out by other government and non-government organizations in the area of international development and, more important, what IDRC's role is within the federal foreign policy framework.

A number of those consulted questioned the roles of IDRC and CIDA and how, or the extent to which, their work is coordinated. For example, in relation to the Leaders G20 Summit, one respondent was unclear about the roles of CIDA and IDRC and how they complemented each other. It was observed by others that more could be done to recognize and build synergies between the two organizations. These tensions are not new and, as a result, there continues to be a need to communicate how the work of each organization influences and supports the other. This is a role that the Communications Division could consider undertaking.

It was suggested by a number of public servants interviewed that IDRC needs to work at all levels to influence and inform CIDA's and DFAIT's foreign and international policy agenda. It was noted by one respondent that CIDA's recent decision to change its organizational structure from a country to a theme-based structure (which is more closely aligned with IDRC's) should facilitate better linkages and opportunities to collaborate.

## SHARING

### *Sharing/Outreach*

*IDRC values, policies, and activities with stakeholders including IDRC staff in headquarters and regional offices and partners.*

### **Key Assessment Points:**

- ⇒ Knowledge brokers – sharing information and making connections to increase the reach of information about IDRC and its research programs.

## Supporting the Communications Needs of IDRC Programs

Among the internal stakeholders consulted, the Communications Division is viewed as assisting different areas of IDRC with developing communications strategies to support projects and outcomes, including packaging key messages and identifying key audiences. In recent years, the Division is seen to be more closely aligned with programming. This has given staff the opportunity to work more closely with the Division and employees are credited with using their knowledge and skills to move research programming into a different sphere – particularly around the policy side.

The Communications Division is credited with playing a key role in helping to translate IDRC's research results into policy. An example of how IDRC has informed policy was the assessment of the impact of slaughterhouses in Nepal. It was noted that IDRC's research was used to demonstrate the impact of slaughterhouses on the surrounding community and contributed to informing the policy decision to restrict slaughterhouses within city limits. The Division was perceived to be helpful in developing the policy brief and plan to showcase this information.

## Connecting Team Leaders to Key People and Events

IDRC has been able to position itself on a number of interdepartmental working groups and the Communications Division was credited by internal stakeholders as helping to raise awareness among programme staff about key working groups where IDRC should be represented. While participation in these working groups is considered essential to maintaining IDRC's relevance and impact, it was recognized that sometimes it is difficult for other federal colleagues to understand that IDRC is not a department. It was also noted by at least three public servants interviewed that program officers need to conduct more outreach with their federal colleagues and that these relationships need to be nurtured.

One public servant observed that the Communications Division will likely need to support IDRC programme staff in working in partnership and in undertaking key outreach activities in order to ensure that IDRC is at the table from Day 1.

*The Division knows how to translate science and research into something that make sense for all.*  
(IDRC Staff)

## Sharing Information

When participants were asked which key Communications Division products they used, the most frequently identified materials included:

*I use their research documents and updates regularly. The communications material on various forms and research results have helped us to stay on top of issues. I have, for example, used their research on the mining sector to inform work here.*  
(Public Servant)

- ⇒ Country profiles and theme profiles;
- ⇒ Annual reports;
- ⇒ Events and speaker series;
- ⇒ Workshops and conferences;
- ⇒ Funded projects such as films and the Montreal Biosphere;
- ⇒ Senior level roundtables including the series on globalization for Paul Martin; and
- ⇒ Communications strategies, advice and products.

A sample of key events that were identified by stakeholders interviewed in this consultation process include:

- ⇒ *Making the Most of Research: Research and the Policy Process* in Ottawa on June 21, 2004. Developed in partnership with IDRC's Evaluation Unit.
- ⇒ *Bringing the Best of the Private Sector to Development*, Conference of Montreal, CIDA/IDRC International Forum. June 7, 2004.
- ⇒ International Forum on Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health. Montreal, May 18-23, 2003.
- ⇒ World Summit on Sustainable Development.
- ⇒ World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Geneva 2003, Tunis 2005. WSIS is a major UN Summit being held in two phases, under the patronage of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which provides a platform for dialogue on the central role ICTs play in human development. The first phase took place in Geneva, Switzerland from December 10-12, 2003. The second phase will take place in Tunis, Tunisia from November 16-18, 2005. IDRC and its partners have been engaged in the WSIS Preparatory Process from the onset. In Geneva, IDRC organized two workshops at the ICT4D Platform, exhibited projects at the Canadian Pavilion, supported webcasted interviews and special coverage from the Summit, and participated in numerous workshops and events to promote digital inclusion in the information society.
- ⇒ Third World Water Forum. Kyoto, Japan, March 16-23, 2003.
- ⇒ Senior consultations on CS&PF development.

*Their weakest link is their communications side, not the knowledge generation side or the quality of work. They do best with the policy community but don't do well (communicating) beyond that community.*  
(External Expert)

*Despite doing all the right things, their degree of penetration is limited because there is a limited appetite for their information.*  
(Public Servant)

## Expanding IDRC's Voice and Reach: The Media

Even though it has made a concerted effort to inform the informers, IDRC has not enjoyed as great a media/public profile as many observers believe it deserves, especially given the value and success of its activities. This may reflect some weaknesses in its media relation's strategic approach or capacity.



However, this perception needs to be tempered with the understanding that there is limited media interest in international development issues and few opportunities to “get the story out” domestically.

*The mass media is not serving us well and it's getting worse. It's really a struggle to get even outlets like the CBC, which have traditionally been more attuned to international issues, to see they should be doing stories beyond the spotlight stories.*  
(Journalist)

*I think the role of IDRC, by virtue of its mandate not being about humanitarian assistance, sends a better message about developed and developing countries working in a partnership of equals to create a better world. People can see that international development is not just about sending bags of flour. It's also about research that leads to long-term solutions. If IDRC could improve its public communications outreach, I think it could benefit the entire development community.*  
(Public Servant)

IDRC is viewed as enjoying less success in influencing the media, at least English-language news outlets. While the Centre has long enjoyed a good working relationship with French-language journalists covering international development issues, based on the feedback of those consulted, there seems to be less knowledge of the organization's role, both internationally as well as within the foreign policy family, among journalists working for major news organizations in English Canada.

Aside from the fact that it's hard to explain things like technical cooperation on governance issues in a 30 second clip, there are few venues for these kinds of stories. One informant from the field of journalism noted that there has been a tremendous decline in the number of foreign bureaus and foreign coverage among North American news outlets, by some estimates as much as 50% in both the United States and Canada. A further challenge is the mass media's fixation on “spotlight” stories – the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq and most recently Sudan – where conflict or humanitarian crises are the only items considered newsworthy. Journalists pour into particular regions for short periods, to focus on a “hot” topic, leaving all other areas and issues in the shadows. When the spotlight shifts, the issue is ignored and soon forgotten.

Despite these challenges, IDRC's unique role and credibility both domestically and internationally provides a platform to educate Canadians about both the importance and positive impacts of international development efforts.

## CASE STUDIES

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The objective of the case study review is to document and assess the activities and results achieved through two initiatives that IDRC was involved with, both to identify the impact of IDRC within those initiatives and to identify the role and impact of the Communications Division.

The following two case studies were developed based on documentation review and interview consultations.

### THE DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES TASK (DOT) FORCE

#### Background

The Digital Opportunities Task (DOT) Force was formed following the 2002 G8 summit in Okinawa, Japan, where an agreement was reached to establish a special initiative to address the digital divide between industrialized and developing countries. The DOT Force brought together representatives from international/multinational organizations, government, industry and civil society, drawn from G8 member countries and from the developing world. Together, they conceived a forward-looking action plan to expand the use of ICTs for social and economic development.

Canada's representatives on the DOT Force included the President of IDRC, the Deputy Minister of Industry Canada, and the Chief Executive Officer of Telesystem Ltd. The DOT Force marked the first time an event that fell within the areas of international development and foreign affairs, but neither DFAIT nor CIDA played a central role in representing Canada's position. The unique governance structure was designed to tap into the experience of key thought leaders in the area of information/communications technologies (ICTs) and their applications and benefits within a development context.

The DOT Force officially concluded when its Report was delivered to the G8 Summit in Kananaskis in June 2002. A nine-point action plan (the Genoa Plan of Action), which detailed a set of priority projects, was handed over to the UN ICT Task Force for further implementation and continuity.

*The G8 was an exception and the DOT Force, based on the multi-stakeholder governance, was an even greater exception.*  
(Public Servant)

## IDRC Role and Influence

The multi-stakeholder approach of the DOT Force – which drew on the strengths of government, intergovernmental bodies, as well as the non-profit and private sectors – is recognized as having been a key to the success of the initiative. This approach now serves as the model for other global ICT-based development initiatives that have followed in its footsteps.<sup>1</sup> While Industry Canada and Telesystem Ltd. represented Canada’s public and private sectors respectively, IDRC, with its extensive networks of NGOs and development researchers, represented civil society. This governance structure was designed to allow Canada to articulate an integrated voice on the use of ICTs for development purposes.

*IDRC brought more grassroots and expertise in research in the developing world. The Centre’s focus on using technology and other knowledge tools to support community building and development included a focus on learning, poverty reduction, health improvement and how the role and use of ICTs to affect changes in these critical area.*  
(Public Servant)

Among those consulted who were familiar with the initiative, it was felt that IDRC’s invitation to participate as a co-chair of the DOT Force was based on the recognition that the Centre was one of the first development agencies to embrace ICTs as a vehicle to foster development and alleviate poverty. With established programs such as *Acacia* in Africa, *Pan Asia Networking* in Asia, and *Pan Americas* in Latin America, IDRC had acquired a breadth of experience to bring to bear as to the impact of ICTs on the lives of people in the developing world. The President, in her role as co-chair, was viewed as a key asset to the initiative – very credible and able to successfully influence the foreign policy agenda.

One of the co-chairs noted that, prior to DOT Force, his exposure to IDRC had been very limited. While he knew of the Centre and its work, he did not really appreciate the depth of its knowledge and expertise in international development. The experience of working as co-chairs is viewed as opening doors to IDRC to work more closely with DFAIT.

## IDRC’s Impact on the DOT Force Initiative

IDRC’s participation in the DOT Force is perceived as making a critical contribution to the outcomes of the initiative. IDRC was identified as being intellectually prepared, with the expertise and credibility to assume a leadership role. IDRC’s knowledge of the applications of ICTs within a development context was viewed as demonstrating how narrowly and quickly Canada has defined its foreign policy levers.

The DOT Force signaled a paradigm shift in international development - from a predominant focus on infrastructure to a more strategic approach aimed at catalyzing longer-term change. IDRC was viewed as leading and enabling this new paradigm.

<sup>1</sup> Report Card: Digital Opportunities for All



While many traditional development agencies were focused on infrastructure and hardware, IDRC, with its emphasis on research, community involvement and partnership with a broad range of stakeholders, was perceived to be breaking new ground in this important area of international development.

In the foreign policy arena, the Centre brought flexibility and action-oriented, fresh perspectives to the agenda. Prior to the DOT Force initiative, IDRC had identified the transformative potential of ICTs to contribute to development, particularly economic growth. These views had yet to dominate the policy discourse within the broader Canadian foreign policy community.

## Lessons Learned/Recommendations

Overall, IDRC's participation in the DOT Force helped to change the perception of, and increased awareness about, the Centre and its role in the areas of international development and foreign policy among other key government departments/agencies involved in the initiative.

IDRC enjoys an enviable international reputation, perceived by those consulted as far exceeding that of other development agencies. Despite the accolades and general consensus that the Centre is a valued source of creative and strategic ideas and tested expertise regarding international development, however, it was recognized IDRC was invited to the DOT Force table to represent the NGO community as opposed to government. The challenge for IDRC will be to ensure that it is viewed as a key government stakeholder with unique information and expertise that is essential to the process.

It was recommended that IDRC be proactive in pressuring for similar representation in future international development initiatives and task forces. It was widely recognized that IDRC can bring a community based voice and experience that is lacking in CIDA and DFAIT.

This case study demonstrates the distinctive perspective and value-added role that IDRC can bring to Canada's foreign policy family. IDRC's ability to be at the leading edge of research in an area that emerged as pivotal to international development and its vast network of researchers and NGOs, that are actually developing and applying the research, gives IDRC the credibility to have a strong voice at the table.

*IDRC's ability to undertake research and use evidence from research to inform and influence policy is viewed as a strong asset. It helped to achieve a major break through in integrating intellectual policy and what the government was actually doing.*  
(Public Servant)

## CONFERENCE OF MONTREAL, JUNE 7, 2004

### CIDA/IDRC INTERNATIONAL FORUM: *BRINGING THE BEST OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DEVELOPMENT* FORUM

## Background

*There was some reluctance at IDRC at the beginning, but I've seen a real change in the relationship – it has evolved over the years – and we have appreciated and benefited from IDRC's input, more and more with each Conference. I don't know if it's because of our input but I know that people we brought together have benefited from IDRC's perspective. We deal with tough cookies who are not always receptive to government types.*  
(External Expert)

*IDRC brings ministers from economic sectors who are willing to talk about their interests with business executive. Instead of only talking policy, they talk about real life issues that are relevant to the people we bring to these conferences. It is not an easy gap to bridge, but IDRC is able to communicate the importance and the benefit.*  
(External Expert)

The Conference of Montreal: The International Economic Forum of the Americas is a unique economic forum of the Americas, an initiative of the Institut international d'études administratives de Montreal Inc., a non-profit organization established in 1995 in collaboration with a number of universities and corporations. It is an annual four-day event that brings together representatives of governments and international organizations, business people, academics, leading experts from around the world, as well as members of civil society, to discuss challenges of the international economy. The Conference of Montreal is organized in conjunction with the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The conference also receives support from the federal government, the Government of Quebec, as well as the City of Montreal.<sup>2</sup>

The “Bringing the Best of the Private Sector to Development” Forum was organized by IDRC, in partnership with CIDA, for the June 2004 annual Conference. The Forum's goal was to address some of the key questions around the issue of the so-called “triple bottom line” – reconciling environmental and social contributions with financial profitability. This was a response to the recommendations made in a recent United Nations report by the UN Commission on the Private Sector and Development, co-chaired by Prime Minister Paul Martin and Ernesto Zedillo, former president of Mexico. The report calls for major initiatives to promote the growth of the private sector that is committed to sustainable development.

## IDRC's Role and Influence

Over the years, IDRC has become increasingly interested and involved in the initiative. In recent years it is viewed as becoming a key partner in the Conference of Montreal. Conference organizers interviewed for this consultation process indicated that, when first invited to support the

<sup>2</sup> The Conference of Montreal. Home Page:  
<http://www.conferencedemontreal.com>.



*In an economic forum, there has to be room for a human dimension and they (IDRC) bring a different perspective, which is more and more valued by economic leaders. There are some benefits in dealing with poverty and large-scale governance change, which includes allowing the Third World to participate in the dialogue. IDRC not only supports this perspective, but also provides access to it.*  
(External Expert)

*The Conference of Montreal has helped bridge a gap between the development research communities and business leaders, and IDRC has certainly played a significant role in this respect.*  
(Public Servant)

*The work of IDRC is excellent – they have shown flexibility and creativity in trying to put together the best possible program.*  
(Public Servant)

Conference, IDRC was not perceived to be enthusiastic about the idea. However, this perception is viewed as evolving with IDRC's more active participation. Having been involved with the Conference for a number of years, IDRC now considers the Conference as a strategically important Forum to reach out to business representatives from around the world, communicate its priorities and concerns, and gain greater influence and understanding among world leaders.

The Conference of Montreal has provided IDRC with access to highly influential business leaders. At the same time, it has given IDRC the opportunity to connect its researchers with interested business leaders. In fact, according to one external expert, the Conference has resulted in a win-win outcome for both business leaders and IDRC as awareness is growing among the business community that there has to be greater room for the human and social dimensions in economic forums. Both the organizers of, and participants at, the Forum have come to realize the benefits of dealing with issues like poverty alleviation and large-scale governance change. In this context, the knowledge and expertise found in IDRC's applied development research and its broad access to leaders and community-based organizations in the developing world are viewed as highly valued by economic leaders. IDRC's input at the Forum has contributed to the integration of the economic and social aspects of development.

The Centre's perspective is perceived as being different from its government colleagues. It is viewed as well grounded in the reality of the rapidly changing environment and is particularly welcomed and appreciated by those business executives who want to talk about "real-life" issues that are relevant to their activities, rather than having esoteric policy discussions.

IDRC's work related to the Forum is seen as being complementary to that of CIDA, as the two organizations have gained credibility in different areas. Health and mining (and its impact on the environment) are among those areas identified where IDRC has had a major influence at the Conference. IDRC is also seen as playing a complementary role with NGOs. In many areas – in conducting research and providing perspective, for example – IDRC's credibility is viewed as far exceeding that of the NGO community.

## Role of the Communications Division

The Communications Division of IDRC was identified as working closely with Industry Canada to design a program to present at the 2004 Conference. When the theme for the half day workshop *Bringing the Best of the Private Sector to Development* was identified, it was noted that IDRC asked that CIDA be included as a partner in organizing the event.

The Communications Division was seen as having a “considerable influence on the event” and providing research and information that set the context for the Conference. A representative from the Division worked closely with Industry Canada, which was also organizing a half-day workshop that ran concurrent with the IDRC/CIDA workshop.

The Communications Division also worked closely with various areas of programming within IDRC to ensure that its research findings and reports were effectively showcased at the Conference. The Division was considered to be immensely helpful in developing the communications strategy, as well as policy briefs and working with the program areas to understand how their information could be best marketed at the Conference. An example given was the assistance the Division provided in helping to package and effectively communicated IDRC’s research findings related to the use of slaughterhouses in Nepal and linking it to the decision to limit slaughterhouses within city limits.

## Lessons Learned/Recommendations

The Conference of Montreal deals with a wide range of issues surrounding the international economy. IDRC was initially a component of the Forum’s extensive and diversified discussion, bringing a distinct perspective on a number of related issues. As the Conference focuses on areas where IDRC has experience and expertise, such as Africa and ICTs, it is likely that IDRC researchers will be increasingly incorporated into core economic discourse.

IDRC is viewed as a major informer by the organizers of the Conference of Montreal, and its input and feedback has been sought on a regular base and has been greatly appreciated in developing the conference’s programs. One suggestion made was that IDRC could more effectively communicate in advance its priorities and targeted policy issues and research areas for the coming year. This would help the organizers to keep abreast of the latest trends and perspectives in the field, and plan their activities for the years ahead.

This case study demonstrates the impact that IDRC’s outreach and participation in world events and conferences has on raising its profile and understanding among leading minds who are grappling with similar development issues, and in influencing the broader business community to consider development issues and concerns.

*I think the improvements in the Conference are because of their (IDRC’s) efforts. They bring a good perspective that is grounded in reality. Maybe it’s my understanding of what they do that makes me think they are getting better, but certainly my impression of them has improved a lot over the years as I see them in action and better understand what they do. I strongly believe they have been successful in improving their relationships with the business community.*  
(External Expert)

## REPOSITIONING IDRC: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This high level stakeholder consultation of the Communications Division's public affairs and government relations activities was conducted with the intent of providing direction to the Division and IDRC as it moves forward into its next strategic planning phase. Throughout the consultations, a number of strategic issues were raised that fall beyond the responsibility of the Communications Division. However, the feedback and issues raised may be of interest to IDRC's Senior Management Committee as it looks to the future and examines its desired position within Canada's foreign policy agenda.

Based on the information collected and analyzed, the following section identifies issues, ideas and recommendations that were made throughout the stakeholder consultation process. This section is intended to provoke further investigation, debate and discussion in determining next steps and courses of action. The first two issues and associated recommendations fall primarily within the realm of IDRC's senior leadership to assess and make decisions. The remainder are more directly targeted at the Communications Division.

*How can IDRC push Canada's "Canada and the World" policy framework to have the most impact on the international development community.*  
(External Expert)

*The global agenda is moving into areas where IDRC is viewed as strongly positioned, including ICTs for development, EcoHealth, global public health, good governance, capacity building, failed states, etc.*  
(Senior Public Servant)

*Do they want to be better known at the risk of being controversial? If they're afraid, they should give up the objective of being known.*  
(External Expert)

### CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

By and large, the majority of those consulted viewed IDRC as an independent think tank with the potential to act as an intellectual catalyst for transformative change in the international development paradigm. In Canada, it was recognized that the key players within the foreign policy family – DFAIT and CIDA – cannot undertake the transformative change that is required without IDRC and its wealth of empirical research that is tested at the local level.

Government representatives and experts in the field who participated in this consultation process encouraged IDRC to remain "ahead of the wave" of international development thinking and to influence and inform Canada's dialogue and policy priorities in these areas.

It was noted that the issues and challenges that IDRC is researching are increasingly becoming a part of the economic discourse. One senior public servant recommended that IDRC should determine which issues will be important to the international economic and development agenda as a baseline for strategic planning rather than the Canadian economic and

development agenda. While IDRC needs to be aligned with the Canadian government's priorities, the majority of the public servants and external experts consulted believe that IDRC should be informing, even leading, Canada's decisions on future development priorities and objectives rather than following them

## POSITIONING IDRC WITHIN CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY FAMILY

IDRC should focus on how it needs to be positioned to influence the foreign policy agenda. Specifically, it will need to examine how to position itself within the new federal environment – including the separation of the foreign affairs and international development into two new departments.

It was recommended by virtually all of the public servants and internal stakeholders consulted that IDRC needs to undertake more outreach in order to inform federal colleagues about IDRC and the value it can bring to the foreign policy discourse. To support this, the Communications Division could:

⇒ Map out IDRC counterparts in each Department that have a significant or relevant international development arm in order to more formally encourage IDRC's program officers and senior leaders in each department to develop relationships and networks. The strategy should target all levels within each organization, at the Director level and above, and should first begin by targeting CIDA, Foreign Affairs Canada followed by International Trade Canada, Industry Canada, Environment Canada, etc. It was suggested that IDRC should continue to build on strong relationships it has with DFAIT.

The identification of key counterparts in pertinent federal departments and agencies will be an important support to programme officers in broadening their professional networks and further encouraging them to undertake more professional outreach in Ottawa. Broader outreach could be further encouraged by introducing accountabilities for programme officers to understand the federal environment and the need to work with federal colleagues and other experts in the broader foreign policy family. Some of the suggestions received by those consulted include:

- ⇒ Package IDRC's top 5 priorities and projects and target counterparts from the Director level up – particularly with CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- ⇒ Organize regular (e.g., annual or semi-annual) senior level meetings with key staff at Foreign Affairs Canada, as well CIDA, to discuss priorities and directions, to examine opportunities to collaborate and to identify

*IDRC needs to develop a strategy to ensure it is adept at working at the senior most levels and in the trenches of relevant organizations. IDRC has very reputable researchers and senior economist – they need to develop higher profile among these people so that they become thought leaders.*  
(Public Servant)

*...the next G8 Summit agenda is being drafted and will look at lessons learned from implementation of key commitments including those coming out of DOT Force. IDRC should position itself within this review to ensure that IDRC's accomplishments are highlighted.*  
(Public Servant)

areas where IDRC's research, conferences and publications can be integrated into key departmental initiatives

- ⇒ Examine how it can influence the directions of International Trade Canada. For example, in the case of China and Brazil, IDRC might have some unique insight to inform policy and program decisions.

## TELLING THE STORY OF IDRC

*OECD is poised to review and report on the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. IDRC should think about issuing its own report pointing out the progress it has made towards the achievement of these goals. This would be an excellent opportunity to showcase IDRC work, influence and accomplishments.*

*It's too small a group of people in Canada who know about them and use their resources. It's the best agency in the country, hands down, but they're not telling their story well.*

*Where are the op-ed pieces and commentaries?*  
(External Expert)

It was widely recognized by all those interviewed that IDRC has a long history of research in the international development realm – a wealth of findings and lessons learned in supporting capacity building in the developing world. It was strongly recommended that IDRC be more proactive in telling the story of what it has learned over 34 years of applied development research. It was suggested by one interview respondent that the stories could be told based on key thematic areas and then, based on these findings, IDRC could examine the implications and make recommendations about how Canada can work with its international partners to support more innovative and community based approaches to development.

Both journalists and the external experts consulted agreed that the IDRC story would be a solid communications product to both promote the Centre and to influence government and other experts working in the area of international development and foreign policy.

It was suggested by one external expert that, in the end, IDRC does not need to answer its organizational conundrum – whether it is an organization within or outside of government – but rather it should tell its story, and based on its findings, decide what its next steps should be.

## SUPPORTING IDRC'S INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS REQUIREMENTS

*IDRC "raison d'être" is to be independent and apply research capacity to the south. They may need more tools to inform people of their results and to draw the attention of policy and program designers to what they are finding in key areas – areas that were chosen based on its Board's direction.*  
(Public Servant)

It was recommended by some of the internal stakeholders consulted that the Communications Division could develop more formalized relations with key program areas. This could occur by assigning a communications resource as an advisor to key areas within IDRC. This would likely stretch resources and, as a result, the Division should be strategic in selecting those areas that are the highest priority to IDRC in supporting the Corporate Strategy and Planning Framework. This communications advisor would be the first point of contact to the Division for specific program areas and would liaise to provide communication advice and direction at critical points.





*I would like to receive the mission that they target every year, to be informed of their planning and objectives for the upcoming year...this would make it easier for me to plan conferences. It would be quicker as I wouldn't have to fish around looking for information...it could even just be information contained in a newsletter outlining their main targets, conferences they are organizing or attending, etc. This could help me plan my activities looking a year ahead.*  
(External Expert)

This would also be an effective mechanism to communicate roles and responsibilities of the Communications Division and its organizational structure.

The Communications Division was identified as playing a critical role in tracking key areas where IDRC should be seen and heard – in order to provide greater avenues to showcase IDRC's work and the value the Centre brings to the table. Examples provided include:

- ⇒ Tracking conferences and summits where IDRC should be seen and heard and identify at what level IDRC should participate. The Communications Divisions needs to work to position IDRC to influence the agenda at the front end.
- ⇒ IDRC may want to expand its presence among key international bodies such as Commonwealth events related to the Digital Divide.

## EXPANDING IDRC'S REACH: MEDIA STRATEGY

Consultations with IDRC staff and external experts also reveal that IDRC has had limited success at influencing the media – particularly English media. Those consulted within the organization believe it is critical that IDRC have more presence in the media and that the Communications Division needs to be more strategic and proactive in terms of outreach and relationship building with journalists.

While this stakeholder consultation process only included three journalists, it is clear from their comments that IDRC is usually not the first point of contact when searching for information related to international development. In addition, those consulted did not feel that IDRC had been proactive enough in providing story ideas or relevant information for their needs. It was felt that the Centre could play a useful role in providing background context to world events as well as contacts in the developing world. Deadline-driven journalists generally do not have the time to search for such information.

Key components of a Media Communications Strategy might include:

- ⇒ Gauging the level of awareness among major national news outlets, particularly Parliament Hill bureaus, of IDRC's existence, role and potential information offerings (eg. survey key news bureaus and assignment editors to identify weaknesses and develop corresponding strategies).

*It has a very good reputation internationally but is under-appreciated at home. Part of that is a structural problem, because it funds outside the country so it doesn't have the same domestic constituency. To get beyond that, it is going to have to move in another direction, sharing its knowledge among Canadian researchers as well as southern researchers, policy people and the media.*  
(External Expert)

- ⇒ Telling and selling its story to journalists (Note: this assumes that IDRC has developed its storyline) – understanding that they are hungry for good stories and always on the look-out for credible sources for background briefings as well as lead story ideas.
- ⇒ Continuing to nurture and expand relationships with French-language journalists affiliated with major print and broadcast news outlets.
- ⇒ Developing personal relationships with key English journalists and producers within CBC network Radio and TV, CTV and Global.
- ⇒ Targeting print media, through editorial boards and having Board members or the President develop Op-Ed pieces, as well as strengthened relationships with influential journalists and commentators/columnists.
- ⇒ Offering partial funding for documentaries to specialty television channels with a particular interest in areas such as scientific discovery, or environmental and gender issues (e.g. Discovery, Life, WTN), etc.
- ⇒ Providing media training to Board members and top IDRC executives who could serve as official spokespersons, as well as others within the organization with a capacity to excel in the area of media relations

## INFORMING AND INFLUENCING THE BROADER INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH COMMUNITY

It was recommended by external experts and a number of internal stakeholders that IDRC do more outreach with leading academics and NGOs to influence and inform their perspectives on international development and ultimately their research agenda. This network would provide an additional voice to promote IDRC and its research activities.

It was also noted that IDRC could communicate more broadly with federal politicians. For example, the briefing book that was developed in August 2004 could be distributed more broadly to Cabinet members, shadow cabinets, members of relevant standing committees, departmental colleagues, etc. In addition, IDRC should consider offering an electronic newsletter, on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, providing a brief synopsis of priority activities and progress. This was requested by a large number of those consulted for this study, including academics and journalists. While e-mail overload is an issue, it was suggested that a regular e-newsletter, with attention grabbing subject lines, would allow people to quickly assess whether the information is relevant to their work. The communications should be user friendly and provide quick links to the researchers involved, referenced material and publications.

It was also recommended that the CSPF consultations continue to be used as a vehicle to inform key partners and stakeholders of IDRC's direction and vehicles. The CSPF consultations were viewed very positively among those who participated as a proactive mechanism for sharing information and advancing dialogue between key partners and stakeholders.

## FUTURE APPROACH TO EVALUATION

As previously noted, the Communications Division did not have a formal evaluation framework to guide this evaluation. It is recommended that the Communications Division develop an evaluation framework for the next three to five years in order to identify objectives, outline activities and expected outcomes and develop performance indicators that can be used to guide future evaluation and review exercises. The Division should consider using the evaluation methodology *Outcome Mapping* that has been successfully pioneered by IDRC's Evaluation Unit.



## APPENDIX A: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

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1. Percy Abols  
Economic Policy Advisory, Foreign Affairs Canada
2. Richard Balhorn  
Director General, Foreign Affairs Canada
3. Bob Carty  
CBC Radio
4. Eric Desrosier  
Journalist, Le Devoir
5. Marie Dupont  
Director General, Conference of Montreal
6. Jonathon. Fried  
Senior Foreign Affairs Advisor, Privy Council Office
7. Jennifer Fry  
Journalist, CBC Radio
8. Richard Fuchs  
Director, Information and Communications, IDRC
9. Peter Harder  
Deputy Minister, Foreign Affairs Canada
10. Ingrid Knuston  
Director, Canadian International Development Agency
11. Rachel Larabie Lesieur  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Industry Canada (Check title)
12. Jean Libel  
Director, IDRC
13. Mary Pat MacKinnon  
Director, Canadian Policy Research Network
14. David Maloney  
Vice President, Canadian International Development Agency

15. Jennifer Moore  
Director General, Environment Canada
16. Maureen O'Neil  
President, IDRC
17. Janice Stein  
Director, Munk Centre of International Studies, University of Toronto
18. Paul Turcotte  
Director, Canadian International Development Agency
19. Richard Simpson  
Director General, Industry Canada
20. Rohinton Medhora  
Vice President, IDRC